



Current protocols for Parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston

As of September 22, 2020

This document is for parish life. The Catholic Schools Office has a separate set of protocols for schools. In an attempt to keep things as simple as possible, this document deals only with requirements, not with best practices.

N.B. Everywhere that this document refers to the wearing of masks, it should be understood that the mask covers both the mouth and the nose.

Protocols for indoor Masses

1. All people entering the church who are older than five years old must be wearing a mask, and must continue wearing the mask until they leave, unless they have a specific speaking/singing role at the Mass.
 - a. Children under the age of two should not wear a mask.
 - b. Children from ages two to five should wear a mask only at the discretion of their parents.
 - c. If a person has a medical condition that makes it impossible for them to wear a mask, they can be exempted, and they do not need to present any documentation of that condition.
 - d. If a person refuses to wear a mask and it clearly is not a case as outlined in (c), the pastor can refuse them entry to the church.
2. When inside the church, all people who are not a part of the same household must maintain a distance of six feet from one another.
 - a. Churches need to be clearly marked as to where people can sit, and volunteers need to be trained to help people to sit in the right places.

- b. That six foot distance should be maintained as people approach to receive Holy Communion.
3. A system must be in place to track the number of people who have come to a Mass, so that the church does not fill beyond safe capacity. A parish may choose to keep a list of people who have attended Mass.
4. Temperatures of all volunteers must be taken before they volunteer at Mass.
5. A limited number of lay people can be trained to provide liturgical ministry safely. This includes readers, cantors, instrumentalists, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist.
 - a. When the minister is exercising his or her ministry (the cantor singing, the reader reading) they can remove their mask, but no one should be closer than six feet to them during that time. When they have finished their speaking or singing role, they should put their masks back on.
 - b. Because it would be difficult for altar servers to exercise their ministry while maintaining a distance of six feet, altar servers are not allowed at this time.
6. Congregational singing is not allowed.
7. Holy Communion must be distributed in a way that is safe.
 - a. The priest and/or extraordinary minister must disinfect his or her hands before distributing Communion.
 - b. The priest and/or extraordinary minister must wear a mask while distributing Communion.
 - c. The communicant must wear a mask while receiving Communion. After the minister has moved on to the next person, or after the communicant has stepped aside, they should remove their mask, consume the Host, and put their mask back on before returning to their seats.
 - d. The norm must be that communion is given in the hands.
 - i. In the case of a person insisting on receiving on the tongue, if the priest feels comfortable doing so, he can disinfect his hands, give the communicant Holy Communion on the tongue, disinfect his hands again, and continue distributing Communion.
 1. This is an exception, and must not be the norm in a parish.
 2. Some priests, because of their own health vulnerabilities, may decide that they are not comfortable giving a person Holy Communion on the tongue even as an exception, and their concerns must be respected.
 - e. Some parishes have developed very different ways of distributing Holy Communion. As long as those methods are safe, reverent, and approved by the regional Bishop or episcopal vicar, they may proceed.
8. All seating must be disinfected after each Mass.
9. If it is found that one of the people who attended Mass had CoVid at the time they attended
 - a. An announcement of that fact should be placed on the parish web site (but not the sick person's name)
 - b. If a list has been kept, people on the list should be informed.
 - c. The local Board of Health must be notified.
 - d. The Archdiocese of Boston must be notified, either through the regional Bishop or episcopal vicar, or through corona@rcab.org
10. These protocols apply to all Masses – weekend, daily, Funeral, Nuptial.

Additional Protocols for Inside Masses for Parishes in the Red Zones

11. Temperatures of all people must be taken before they enter the church. Anyone with a temperature of greater than 100.4 Fahrenheit (38 Celsius) should not be admitted.
12. Strict lists must be kept of all people attending the Mass.

Changes to the protocols if the Mass is outside

Most of the protocols above apply also to outdoor Masses, with the following exceptions.

13. If attendees remain in the cars, they do not need to wear masks while they are in their cars. When the priest or minister comes to give them Communion, they must put on a mask.
14. Taking temperatures outdoors can be unreliable, and therefore temperatures do not need to be taken for outdoor Masses.

Protocols for Faith Formation

If a parish chooses to have in-person faith formation for the children of the parish, the following protocols must be followed.

15. A parish must prepare a safety plan.
 - a. Elements of that safety plan are discussed here: <https://rcabrisk.org/faith-formation-guidelines/>
 - b. A checklist for the safety plan can also be found at the link above.
 - c. Temperatures must be taken of all students and volunteers and staff.
 - d. All students and volunteers and staff must wear face coverings at all times.
 - e. Wherever possible, six foot social distancing must be maintained. If six feet is not possible, a minimum of three-foot distance must be maintained.
 - f. Proper ventilation must be assured.
 - g. In any single enclosed space (such as a classroom) no more than 8 people per 1,000 square feet and no more than 25 people in total can be present.
 - h. Frequent washing of hands and use of sanitizer is required.
 - i. Complete attendance lists must be kept for every gathering.
16. If a parish is in the red zone in a particular week, in-person faith formation may not be held that week.
17. Food may not be served.

Protocols for small group gatherings inside

18. Small groups (twenty-five persons and under, with no more than 8 people per 1000 square feet of space) may gather in parish spaces if necessary.
19. All of the safety protocols in place for Masses must be respected
 - a. All participants must wear masks
 - b. All participants must maintain six feet of distance.
 - c. Proper ventilation is required.
 - d. The distribution of food is not allowed.
 - e. The area must be sanitized after the meeting.
20. If a parish is in the red zone, small group gatherings are not allowed.

Protocols for group gatherings outside (for things that are not worship)

21. Groups of up to fifty may gather outside.
 - a. All participants must wear masks
 - b. All participants must maintain six feet of distance.
 - c. The distribution of food is not allowed.

Protocols for Communion Calls

22. Communion may be brought to the sick and homebound under the following conditions.
 - a. An individual member of the clergy or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may visit only one Communion call in any fourteen-day period.
 - i. The rationale is to prevent the spread of the virus by the person bringing Communion. If the minister were to visit five communion calls in one morning, and the first recipient had CoVid and gave it to the minister, potentially he or she could give it to four others, all in vulnerable categories. Thus, only one call each two weeks.
 - ii. So, for instance, if you have fifty Communion calls, and you want to get Communion to each one once a month, you will need twenty-five visitors.
 - b. The minister must wear a mask and must disinfect his or her hands before giving Communion, and again after leaving the home.
 - c. If it is feasible for the communicant to wear a mask, that should be done.
 - d. If it is feasible for the minister to be met outside of the home, that should be done.
 - e. The visit must be very brief.
 - f. If it is possible to arrange for a family member to bring Communion to the shut-in, that could be done apart from the restrictions in this protocol.
 - g. If a parish is in the red zone, Communion calls should be suspended.

Protocols for Funerals

23. Funeral Masses must follow all of the same protocols as inside Masses.
24. The Funeral Director needs to be informed of all of the protocols, including limits on the number of attendees, and must cooperate with the pastor in enforcing those limits.
25. A priest, deacon, or other minister may not go to a wake during normal visiting hours. However, they may go before visiting hours, and pray only with the immediate family.
26. It should be requested that the eulogy be delivered at the funeral home or at the cemetery.

Protocols for Adoration

27. Adoration falls under the aegis of worship. All of the protocols in place for indoor Masses need to be followed during Adoration.
28. If a priest is not present during the whole time, another responsible staff member or volunteer must be designated to watch over the event and ensure its safety.
29. The space must be cleaned after Adoration.

Protocols for Youth Ministry

30. Youth Ministry may be held as a small group inside (twenty-five or less), or a larger group outside (fifty or less).
31. Leaders must ensure that all safety protocols, especially masks and distancing, are observed at all times, both inside and outside.
32. The parish must not allow groups of youth to hang out without masks and without distancing on parish grounds before and after youth ministry events.
33. Food may not be served. However, participants can bring their own snacks if they wish.
34. If a parish is in the red zone, youth ministry should be suspended.

Protocols for Sports

35. CYO Basketball will not be held this year.
36. Parishes may not lease out their space, either indoor or outdoor, to other leagues. If there is a pre-existing arrangement, the parish should contact the Archdiocesan legal office.
37. Sports should not be a part of Youth Ministry at this time.

Protocols for Pilgrimages and Mission Trips

38. Pilgrimages and mission trips are not allowed at this time.